

The Impact of a Structured Mental Health Programme in Hong Kong Primary Care: A Service Review from 2019 to 2022

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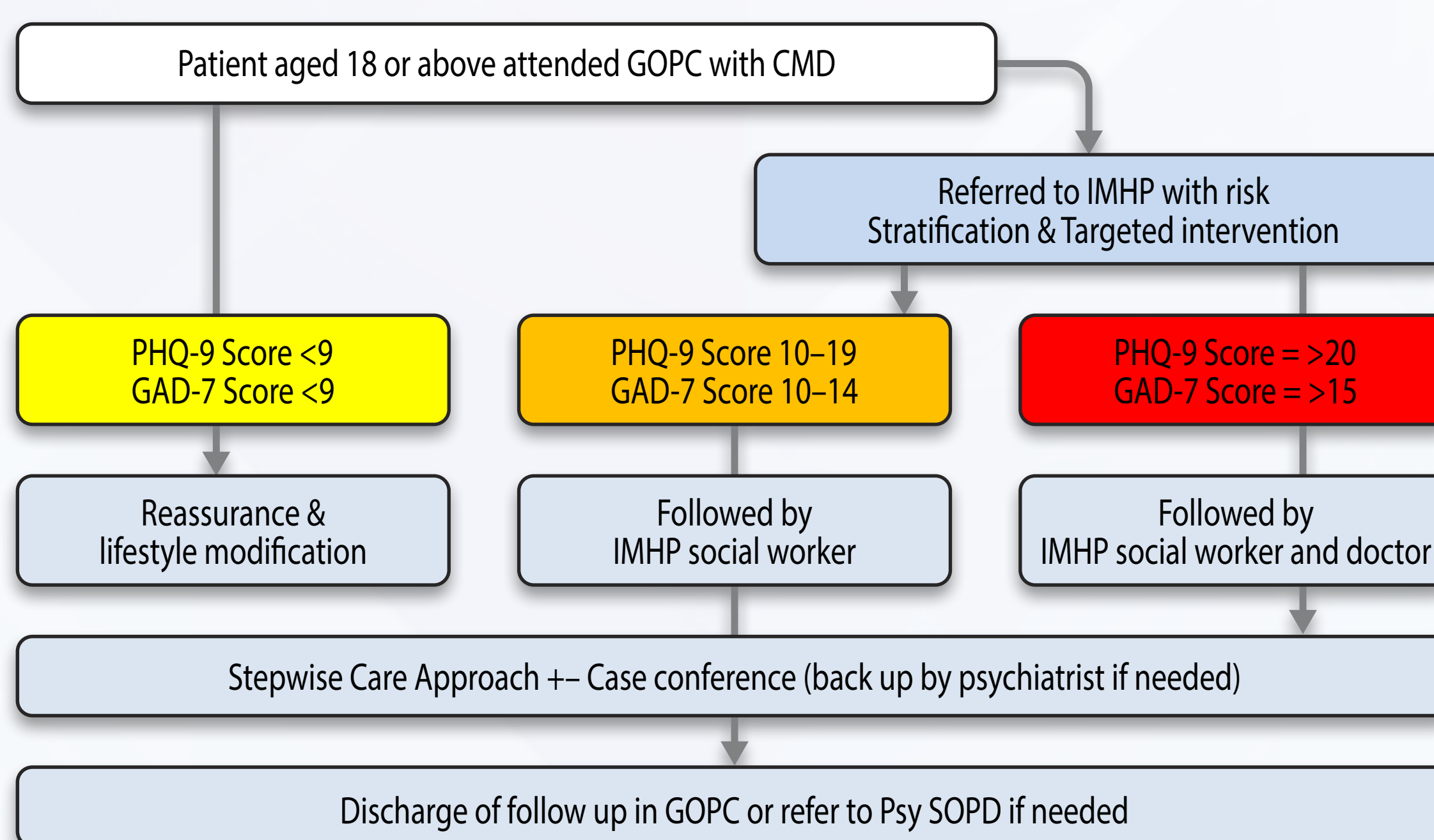
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Introduction

New Territories West (NTW) is a region in Hong Kong with a population of around 1 million. In Hong Kong, public primary care services are operated by General out-patient clinics (GOPC) and patients with common mood disorders are recruited into the Integrated Mental Health Program (IMHP) within the GOPC. Patients under IMHP are managed by a multidisciplinary team that consists of social workers, clinical psychologist and family medicine specialists. (Fig 1)

Figure 1. NTWC IMHP workflow



Methods

Patients attended the IMHP were monitored by Patient health questionnaire- 9 (PHQ-9) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item questionnaire (GAD-7) to assess their severity and were offered appropriate care. The PHQ-9 and GAD-7 scores of each patient from April 2019 to September 2022 were recorded and analysed.

Results

A total of 3420 patients received IMHP services in NTW during this period. Among the total, 75% had improvement in their PHQ-9 and GAD-7 score after attending IMHP. Furthermore, 25% of the cases had their PHQ-9 or GAD-7 score improved by over 50%. (Fig 2) In addition, 34.8% of patients during the peak of Covid-19 fifth wave (from February to May 2022) had expressed unstable mood due to the deleterious impact of Covid-19 through enquiry by social workers. The majority (87.3%) could be managed under IMHP, 32.9% were discharged from IMHP back to primary care. (Fig 3) The average numbers of session attended per patient were 5.5 before discharged. Only 12.7% required psychiatrist referral due to complexity of the cases. (Fig 3)

Conclusions

IMHP effectively enhanced the management of common mental health disorders in Hong Kong's public primary care. Not only patients were managed timely at the right level of care, it also reduced the burden of psychiatric referral.

Figure 2. Results of IMHP patients assessed using PHQ-9 and GAD-7 questionnaires during the period of 2019-2022.

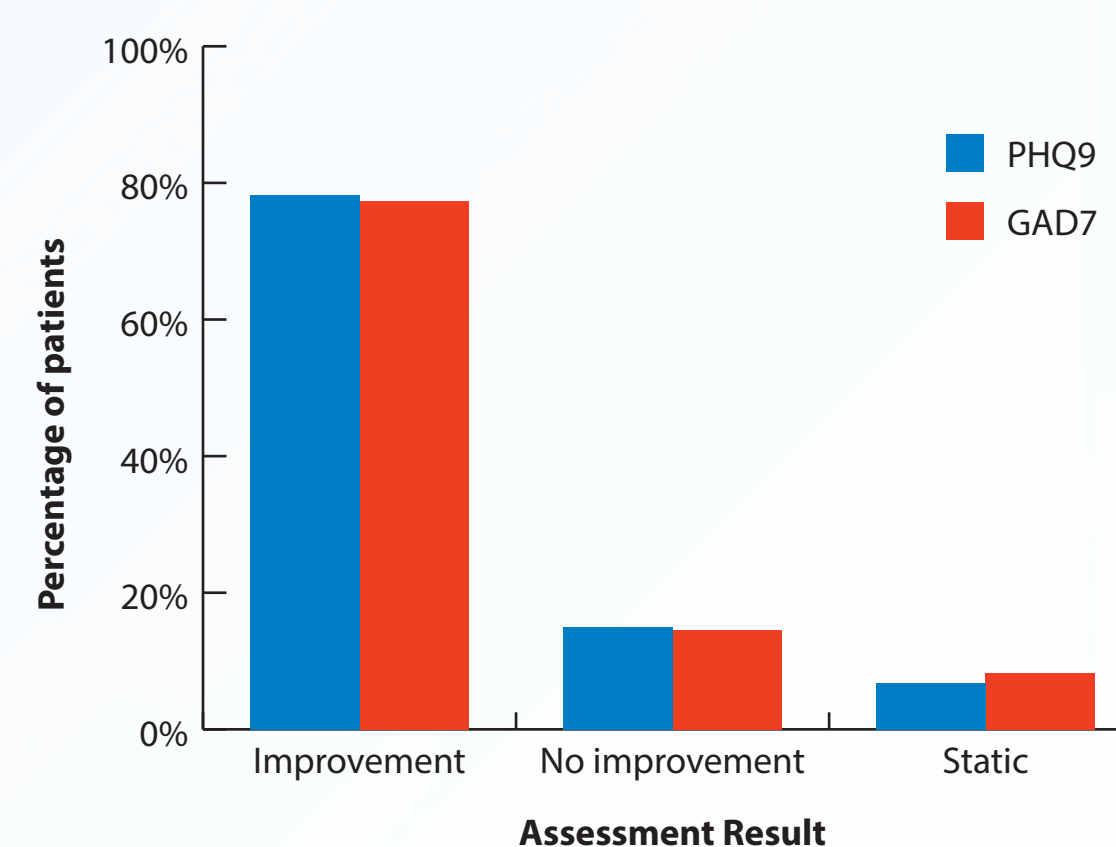


Figure 3. Patient outcomes in IMHP

